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ABSTRACT

This issue of "Kansas English" contains three articles on the topic "English Literature Outside Traditional Rubrics." The first article, by Nancy S. Prichard, discusses the importance of the new literatures in the education of children and young adults. New literatures are defined as the writings of minority group members in the United States and writings in English and French from all parts of the world. The article also discusses some of the specific materials that are available and the reaction of some students who have read these new literatures. The second article, by Priscilla Tyler, discusses teaching approaches to African literature in general, and specifically to "The Road" by Wole Soyinka and "Arrow of God" by Chinua Achebe. The third article, by Vincent Gillespie, discusses Amerindian poetry. The issue also contains a review of "A Question of Power" by Bessie Head, and a description of a law to prevent sex discrimination in educational institutions receiving Federal funds. (TS)

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FOCUS: ENGLISH LITERATURE OUTSIDE TRADITIONAL RUBRICS

Volume 60 February, 1975 Number 2

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Focus: English Literature Outside Traditional Rubrics

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New Literature for a New Decade

–NANCY S. PRICHARD
National Council of Teachers of English

". . .I think we should redefine our 'literary heritage,' think again about what we mean by 'whole and intact,' and give ourselves and our children the uniquely human privilege of inhabiting the world."

Today I would like to do three things. First, talk a little with you about why it is important to the eduation of our children and young adults to include "new" literatures in all classrooms, at all levels, no matter what the racial composition of the student body, the faculty, or the community. By "new" literatures, I mean the writings of minority group members in our counties and writings in English (and French) from other parts of the world, such as Africa, Australia, New Zealand, India, The Phillippines, and the West Indies. Then I want to talk more specifically about some materials that are available. And finally give you the reactions of some students who have read these new literatures, since after all, what happens to our students is the criterion by which we judge the success of what we are doing when we say we are teaching.

First, however, let me suggest some answers to the question of why, at a time when you are giving increasing attention to your indigenous literary heritage and more time to its teaching in your schools, you should divert that attention or divide that time.

I think the reasons for looking more carefully and with greater pride at the wealth and diversity of Canadian literature are much the same as for looking beyond our borders to literatures in English (and French for you, since you are a bilingual nation) other than those we have traditionally called "world" literatures.

A basic reason for knowing our national literature has to do with our self-awareness and self-concept, both as individuals and as members of a society and a particular culture. We need to know who we are and where we have come from. We need to see through other eyes than our own the land that shaped our history. We need role models as we develop our individual selves. We need, in our multi-cultural countries, to know who our fellows are and to be aware of alternative ways of interacting with them. And since we discover and shape ourselves through language, we can, through reading, experience other lives even as that language experience shapes the one we are living. So we read our national literature to give breadth to our awareness of the alternatives within our own culture. And this awareness of other lives extends our individual alternatives of being and becoming.

But these days, to know ourselves only within the context of our national literary boundaries, while vital, is not enough. We are, as Archibald MacLeish reminded us, "riders on the earth together," and we need to know our fellow passengers, to extend our self-concept beyond its traditional limits, to become inhabitants of McLuhan's

Nancy Prichard is Associate Executive Secretary of the National Council of Teachers of English. Her paper is an edited version of a speech given to the Saskatchewan English Teacher's Association and originally printed in *Skylark*, the official publication of the Saskatchewan English Teachers' Association, Vol. 8, No. 1, Fall, 1971.

"global village." And, perhaps even more importantly, as teachers we have a responsibility to help our students live comfortably in a world which is smaller, more crowded and more diverse than the one we grew up in.

Someone recently said that English is an additive subject, by which he meant that we just keep fitting an increasing number of subjects or sub-items under the rubric of "English." I suppose it all began with literature; then we added grammar and composition, and more recently we found ourselves teaching reading, speech, drama, journalism, creative writing, and a host of separable but allied subjects. In particular, as we looked more and more closely at literature and divided it chronologically, generically, thematically, and culturally into more finely delineated specialities, we found ourselves including a greater number of novels, say, or poems, or short stories, because not to do so would ignore a particular category.

But we never throw anything out to make room for the additions—or we seldom do. We just crowd in more subject matter, more content—and suffer in many ways. One of the reasons we say we can't throw anything out is that we must respect "the literary heritage" and pass it on, whole and intact, to our students. But perhaps we ought to look with fresh eyes at our definition of "the literary heritage" and especially at what we have meant by its "wholeness." Perhaps one of our problems has been that far from including too much, we have simply divided an inherited body of literature into smaller and smaller bits and have, in fact, excluded and ignored a great deal of literature which has developed outside but parallel to that package.

This certainly is what has happened in the past to Afro-American literature in the States. Since Phillis Wheatley wrote her poems in the Colonial period, an enormous amount of literature has been ignored by most teachers, and most publishers, has found only a very specialized audience, and as a result, generations of U.S. citizens, both black and white, have grown up believing that "literature," except for a few isolated and exotic examples, is written by non-blacks and mostly about non-blacks. The same is true for the literature of American Indians, Americans of Asian ancestry, and for other cultural and ethnic minorities.

It seems to me that in Canada this realization—that your national literature has gotten short shrift—is at least part of the basis for the current controversy in this country. The spokesmen seem to be saying, "Our children grow up knowing all about cricket and crumpets and California and cowboys, but damn-all about Canada. They are more familiar with the Lake District than with the Laurentians, with Mississippi than Manitoba."

In actuality, of course, this is exaggerated, for we all studied the geography of our own country and carry around in our heads a map of the land—which is more and more specific the closer we get to home—and images of its people. But as a geography teacher once said, "There are two Africas: the real one, and the stereotype we carry around in our heads, which consists mostly of jungles full of monkeys and grasslands full of lions and giraffes. But there is more to the reality than that!"

And if the reality of our own land is distorted by distance and unfamiliarity, how much more is this true of the rest of the world and the diversity of people who dwell in it. The question then is, how do we become aware of that geographic, climatic, scenic reality and people it with individuals rather than with groups we can comfortably and unthinkingly call "they"?

How do we internalize the diversity of our own land and our wider world; how can we come to know and respect the variety of our countrymen and our world companions?

One way is by reading the literature written by those whose knowledge is gut-knowledge, whose language and perceptions and attitudes have been formed by being an integral part of another place, another culture, another milieu. And that way, while not the only one, is the way we can follow most easily—being readers ourselves—and can most happily lead others to—being teachers of literature.

So, I think we should redefine our "literary heritage," think again about what we mean by "whole and intact," and give ourselves and our children the uniquely human privilege of inhabiting the world.

Let me here, having talked rather grandly and in large terms so far, get down to cases. Some years ago, I persuaded my college to let me teach a course called English Literatures of the World. By that title is meant literature written in English—which may be the writers' first or second language—in those parts of the world not usually included in the ordinary world literature course: Africa, India, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, the West Indies, and Canada. Obviously, some choices had to be made among the seven—no course could include them all, except in snippets. All have exciting literatures, so the choices we made for a variety of reasons: Africa because its literature in English is one of the newest; India because of the flowering of the literature since the 1940s; the Philippines, because it is the only one of the countries whose English is based on American English rather than British English; and Australia, because the pioneer experience there was similar to that in the United States. Those are not all the reasons, of course. Others were the availability of materials, an estimation of what students would find interesting, and what would widen their world of people and literature, and thereby help them to see themselves as part of a larger humanity.

In African literature, we first read Onuora Nzekwu's *Wand of Noble Wood*, for three reasons; it is full of socio-anthropological lore, it is a fascinating story, and structurally it is not a very good novel. It is said, and this may be apocryphal, that Nzekwu first wrote the book as an anthropological treatise but was told by an editor that it would not sell, so he turned it into a novel. Whatever the case may be, the book is a fine introduction to many cultural concepts of the Ibo of Nigeria and at the same time the story line is strong enough to carry students along so that they absorb this background, necessary to their further reading, without getting bogged down entirely in social anthropology. The central problem in the story is that of a young man whose tribal background requires him to buy a bride, but whose modern education has convinced him that he should also love the woman he marries. At first everything seems to be turning out well when he finds a young lady who seems to fit all the traditional requirements, who has a modern education, and who appeals to him romantically. The complication arises when, practically on the eve of their wedding, the girl discovers she is under an ancient curse which will destroy them both if they marry. You can readily see the opportunities the novelist has for explaining customs and describing ceremonies, and after a very contrived conversation early in the book which explains the traditional and modern views on "bride price," students become

aware of when these explanations and descriptions are handled well and when they are not.

You can also readily see the analogies students will draw between their own lives and the predicament of the hero and heroine, between their own relatives and, for instance, the hero's sister, who tells him in the first chapter that the whole village is gossiping about the girl he is going with in the city and that he'd better get rid of her and come back home and find a nice girl to marry.

The other African novel we read was Chinua Achebe's *No Longer At Ease*, the story of a young man whose education in England has been paid for by his tribe's education fund. He returns to Lagos, gets a much respected civil service job, becomes engaged to the girl he loves, and tries to live up to the expectations of his family and at the same time live the sophisticated life of the city. A further complication in his life is that he believes and tries to live up to the civil service tradition of service, loyalty, and incorruptibility. Eventually the temptations of the capital touch him and destroy his dreams.

Literarily, this is a fine novel, both structurally and stylistically far better than *Wand of Noble Wood*. It is witty and ironic and the author's voice is distinctive and consistent. Again, the literary quality is apparent to students and the basic situation and ethical problems are ones they can easily relate to. Many of them, in the classes I was teaching, were the first generation in their families to go to college and they knew they would soon be out in the business world facing difficult ethical decisions.

Finally, we read a variety of poems in the Penguin book of *Modern Poetry from Africa*, edited by Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier. Among them were Wole Soyinka's "Telephone Conversation"; Gabriel Okara's "Piano and Drums"; and "For Granny" and "Night Rain," by John Pepper Clark.

A bit later I will talk specifically about student reactions, but first let me mention briefly the Australian literature we read. First of all, a selection of poems ranging from the early colonial period (Charles Harpur's "A Midsummer's Noon in the Australian Forest") to the folk ballads and bush ballads—the latter a distinctive Australian literary phenomenon—(Henry Lawson's "Ballad of the Drover") to contemporary poems by A. D. Hope, Rosemary Dobson, and Judith Wright. Some students were fascinated by the sense of space and emptiness which informs much of the poetry; some were attracted by the similarity between Australian ballads and the cowboy ballads of the Western United States; some were drawn to the contemporary poems which treat the various ways Australia's antipodean isolation has been pierced since World War II—by the restlessness of returned soldiers, by the heavy immigration from Continental Europe—and the consequent revaluation of both national and individual attitudes toward the land.

Then we immersed ourselves in Patrick White's novel, *The Tree of Man*, a long, densely written book, full of symbolism and introspective stream of consciousness passages. The students, some of them, found this hard going because the story spans a long time period and the brooding quality seems pervasive even as one remembers the exciting scenes of flash floods and bush fires. Yet we all came out of the experience of the book understanding a little better that "lives of quiet desperation" may be lived anywhere, and that in the minute examination of two lives and their setting we can see the lives of many.

Moving now closer to home, and out of the experience of teaching a class in ethnic literatures of the United States, let me just talk briefly about a literature which in the States—and in Canada, too, perhaps—has most recently begun to emerge, to attract the attention of teachers and students, that of the American Indians, or Native Americans, as many of them now prefer to be called.

I have the impression that most little children probably think there are two distinct groups of people called Indians. From their juvenile readers and picture books they know of one group who lived—and may still live—in various exotic kinds of dwellings—teepees, wigwams, igloos, long houses, pueblos; who wear much or little leather clothing—some with fur and some without; who often wear gorgeous body ornaments made of feathers and jewelry made of beads; who ride horses or drive dog sleds; and in general live an exotic, colorful life very different from our own—but a savage one.

The other group, also called Indians, are dirty, shiftless, drunk most of the time, drive their cars recklessly and when they are smashed leave them to rust in the front yards of their homes, which are rundown, unpainted shacks; who, because they will not do and live as their non-Indian countrymen do and live, are no-good Indians. And this picture is unfortunately the one most non-Indian children retain as young adults and adults. As adults they are the creators of their communities, through personal attitudes and social action—or the lack of it. Partly because of their stereotypical views, they create, or allow to continue, or do nothing to stop, a real situation in which the Indians' present status becomes self-perpetuating: a community in which the Indian has little or no opportunity for change.

Now obviously, one course, or one book, or even the proper attention to any group of people through their literature in an English class is not going to work miracles, but at the same time there is no justification for our not making the effort to change. Students of a new generation are in our classrooms and many of their interests are parallel to the unique qualities of the Indian heritage. They are concerned with ecology and would agree with this passage from John Joseph Mathew's *Wah-Kon-Tah*, which gives an Osage Indian's view of the difference between Indian and non-Indian in relation to nature:

> Where the Indian passed in dignity, disturbing nothing and leaving Nature as he had found her; with nothing to record his passage, excepting a footprint or a broken twig, the white man plundered and wasted and shouted; frightening the silences with his great braying laughter and his axes.

This is perhaps far from objective, but it will generate discussion among students and that discussion may lead toward a more realistic view.

In addition to their ecological concerns—and I would think they are as important here as in the States—young people are also interested in other aspects of life which are developed in literature by and about Indians. They are looking to other religions for spiritual values, they are experimenting with alternative life styles, they are groping toward an understanding of ethnic consciousness, their own and others', and they are deeply concerned about the historical accuracy of what they are taught.

Older students' awareness that the culture around them is not entirely comfortable and compatible to the way they would like to live their lives makes a book like M.

Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, the 1969 Pulitzer Prize winner, most appealing. It is a beautiful, tragic, and haunting novel of a young Kiowa's struggle to find himself after having served in the U.S. Army during World War II. The theme, as it is in many Indian novels, is the struggle of the young man to make a place for himself in a society which has alienated him from his traditional culture but will not accept him into the larger society. As one comment on the book pointed out, "the descriptions of the natural setting—the deserts and plains of Arizona—are brilliant and poetic. The move to urban areas must be a devastating experience for the Indian who has grown up in a setting of such stark natural grandeur."

The same conflict of cultures is the theme of Hal Borland's *When the Legends Die*. Here, an Indian family goes into the wilderness to live in the old way after the father accidentally kills a man. When the son is a young teenager, he returns to the small town where they had lived and is captured—I think that's the only word for it—and put for a time into a BIA boarding school. And if you have ever wondered why the Indians are so hot against the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding schools, the experiences of the child in this story will show you: they are horrifying and life-denying. As a young man the central character becomes a rodeo rider, but finally rejects civilization and returns to life in the wilderness. This book is vivid and beautifully written; it can be read by junior high school students as well as by adults; and it is one of very few books about the Indian experience written by a non-Indian which Indians approve of.

You are probably familiar with Oliver LaFarge's *Laughing Boy*, which is suitable for mature juniors and seniors in high school. A tragic and ironic fact is that although this book was written forty years ago (it won the Pulitzer Prize in 1929), conditions among the Navajo which it depicts have not changed appreciably. The forces which destroy the marriage of young Laughing Boy, the struggle of his people to maintain their cultural integrity in the face of the traps devised by the non-Indians and their institutions, are still facts of Navajo life. I should add, however, that the Navajo now have probably more control over the education of their own children than any other tribe in the United States. They have an exciting elementary demonstration school at Window Rock, Arizona, and the Navajo Community College at Many Farms, and the success of their example is a strong influence in the life of Indians all over the States.

Let me just mention two other books. One is Frank Water's *The Man Who Killed the Deer*, again the story of a young man torn by being part of two cultures, Pueblo and Anglo. Martiniano is sent away to a BIA school as a child and when he returns, he finds there is no real place for him in the Anglo community near the reservation and at the same time that he is no longer comfortable in the life of the pueblo. Paralleling his struggle to find himself is the struggle of his people to maintain control over their sacred lands, including a small mountain lake which the U.S. Forest Service wants to take over as a park. That struggle, by the way, is based on fact, and has gone on for thirty years. It is pleasant to add that not long ago the papers reported that the Zuni Indians have succeeded in keeping their sacred lake and the lands around it. The writing in *The Man Who Killed the Deer* is lyrical, evocative, of a high literary quality, and the descriptions are breathtaking. Again, this is a book by a non-Indian about Indian life which Indians approve of as being realistic. This is *not* true, however, of another book by Waters, *The Book of the Hopi*, which has raised nothing but con-

troversy. Some say it is an essential book for anyone interested in the Indians of the United States Southwest; others say it is all wrong. I suppose the best thing to do is read it and reserve judgment.

One book which I have only read about, but which you are probably familiar with and which has received the unreserved praise of Indians, is Sarain Stump's *There Is My People Sleeping*, published by Gray's in Sydney, B.C. The *American Indian Historian* review says:

> This extraordinarily beautiful book was written and illustrated by a Shoshone-Cree-Salish 25 year old now living in Canada. He calls it "Ethnic Poem-Drawings," and the publishers have handled his work with infinite care and sensitivity. . .*There Is My People Sleeping* takes its title from one poem. It goes like this:
>
> And there is my people sleeping
> Since a long time
> But aren't just Dreams
> The old cars without engine
> Parking in front of the house
> Or angry words ordering peace of mind
> Or who steals from you for your own good
> And doesn't wanna remember what he owes you
>
> . . .The book has been adopted for school use in many Canadian schools. Murray Adaskin, composer in residence at Saskatoon, has been commissioned to write an original piece of music which will be dedicated to Sarain Stump and his beautiful book and broadcast coast to coast.

Now, finally, what happened to the students as a result of their reading literature from other cultural and ethnic groups? I think that is best shown by some of their own comments:

—I was excited by English 210 and stimulated to read more than I have before. (I never read much outside or many literary works.) I didn't care for the Australian literature chosen. The course has great value for showing how other nations live and what they think is important in their lives through their literature.

—I have found why these countries are individuals, not just a piece of Asia or Africa. Just because I have had the chance to see other people, the way they really live, made the course worthwhile. I saw how the English language is used differently in each individual country. Many words meant different things.

—It is odd about this class because I had signed up for it because of a need for five more English credits. Had I known what it was like, I would have taken it because it has given me an insight on how other people live, their religious or tribal influences on their day to day lives. . .We cannot live in a closed society.

—. . .grammar is my great love. I've always found literature more difficult. . .But this class was different. I think it's what we've needed for a long time. It ties up geography, social studies and literature all into one big understandable bundle.

—benefits: broader knowledge of literary works by the authors, exposure to the factors which influence their writings, introduced writings outside Europe and America, brought to my attention that there is literary pride on the part of native

Africans, Indians, Filipinos, and Australians. . .It has removed a stereotype I had of Africa and India.

—It really opened my eyes to new areas of culture which I had never explored before. . .fulfilled its purpose in awakening the class to literature from lands we had never even thought of as producing literature. . .It is as if I had just been introduced to Africa, India, and Australia in particular, and am now about to develop their friendship further by more reading, searching out facts, and hopefully visiting someday.

—. . .interesting because we were able to see how the people live in those different countries and how they think in a second language.

—I believe that all the stories I have read on Africa have altered my thinking about both Africa and Africans tremendously. For one thing, I was surprised to learn that there are so many good African writers. I am thinking specifically of Mphahlele and Senghor. I always knew that there were African novelists, but had an image of a first generation Mau Mau that only wrote hate literature. Now I find that many of the Africans are every bit as urbanized as we in the United States. Also that the African has felt every doubt and fear that I have felt. I felt, before the quarter began, that the African must be braver or have less emotion than myself, but these stories from Africa by Africans have made me realize that we all are different yet we are all the same. . .exposed me to some very fine literature that I might never have read.

—The actual value lies in a chance for literary criticism on the part of the student, the enrichment of his life through knowledge of lives in other countries, and the enrichment of his knowledge of other countries and authors.

—. . .introduced me to a new perspective in novels and I will always be indebted to it. The previous novels that I have read were only action-packed thrillers or novels completely dealing with sex. But by reading the required readings, I found that novels dealing with everyday life can be interesting and fascinating.

—. . .leads to understanding of people all over the world. Yet I found that people do not vary that much. But a person cannot judge others until he has actually seen or read about cultures other than his own.

—There is an exotic aspect in studying literature from countries that we are not very familiar with. We can gain a good insight into what the people are like and change pre-assumed stereotypes we might have had about their traits. . .

If we think of education as the changing of the way individuals view their world and themselves, as the changing of preceptions, it seems to me that these new literatures can help students do just that, and enjoy the process, and be conscious of the change.

These, then, are some new literatures for the new decade. Some come from far away; some are close to home. Whichever we choose as the road to the discovery of our fellows will, in Ouida's words, "widen the skirts of light," will loosen the straight-jacket of stereotypes, will expand our neighborhood to global dimensions, and help us to see ourselves differently—perhaps as new people in a new world in the new decade.

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Where Something Stands Something Else Stands Beside It:

Soyinka's "The Road" and Achebe's *Arrow of God*

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The two leading Nigerian authors in English are Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe. Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* has been read widely in Nigerian schools and is increasingly read in American schools. His more complex novel, *Arrow of God*,[1] has also begun to receive the recognition it deserves. Wole Soyinka is not read so widely either in the schools of Nigeria or here; yet his nine plays make an important body of modern dramatic literature. Two of his plays, "Brother Jero" and "The Swamp Dwellers" move along easily as dramatic readings in class sessions. One of his plays which particularly speaks to teachers is "The Road".[2] It is of especial interest to English teachers because its main character, the Professor, directs his life by "the Word" as the "portal" to ultimate being. Both Soyinka's play "The Road" and Achebe's novel, *Arrow of God*, reflect the different cultural and mythological contexts out of which each author writes. Soyinka is a Yoruba of western Nigeria and Achebe, an Ibo of eastern Nigeria. In both their works, the action periodically centers around Masks, or religious celebrations, and the "possession" of man by spirit. Though "The Road" with the Professor as its main character suggests it has references to education, it is about many other things, too. Though *Arrow of God* is about many things other than education, major characters speculate on "the nature of knowledge." In the revised edition of the novel, Achebe makes additions which accentuate the importance of "knowledge" in the conduct of human life. It is, however, a different kind of "knowledge" which he defines to be at the heart of human existence from the knowledge which the West defines in its school books and stores in its university libraries. Both works make provocative additions to the curriculum in English literature and worthy introductions to two of the great Nigerian authors writing in English today.

"The Road" is a kind of education morality play with the characters acting their parts of virtue or vice as members of a motley set of hangers-on around the Professor's garage and junkyard in a cosmopolitan Nigerian city. Instead of "Gluttony," "Pride" and other such names characteristic of the medieval morality play, the all male cast have names suggesting various cultures. The Orient is represented by Say Tokyo Kid and Sergeant Burma; the West by the Professor, Particulars Joe, Chief-in-Town and Samson. The Yoruba in Dahomey are represented by Kotonu who takes his name from a town in that neighboring nation. Salubi has a name common in the Nigerian Yoruba city of Abeokuta. Some of the characters act out roles drawn from the cultures from which their names are derived. Particulars Joe, a policeman, gets his name from wanting "the particulars" of every situation he investigates. Samson, a slick salesman, is deluded by the Delilah's of false values. Say Tokyo Kid lives as sensitive to an animistic world as a Japanese Shinto worshipper. The tangible immediacy with which he feels the many timber spirits of the logs on his truck crowding around him is in contrast to the mystical abstractness of the Professor's "Word" bringing messages

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from Ogun, the supreme creator-through-death god. One of the characters never speaks. He is the mute Murano who limps because one foot rests on "the slumbering chrysalis of 'the Word' ". His name suggests a Yoruba of Muslim faith.

In its dingy setting and scruffy characters, the play is characteristic of the decade in which it was written. Like a flower child of the 60's, it is idealism in dusty dungarees. When the Professor first wanders on stage in one of his out-of-it, absent-minded phases, he wears a Victorian suit. And a Victorian idealist he is—in part—throughout the play. His dream of the idealistic imperative grows out of the Victorian dream of the ideal that missionaries and educators took with them in the nineteenth century to the distant colonies of the British Empire. Some of their concepts linger on in former British holdings like Nigeria. The Professor's Victorian clothes suggest, then, that education in Nigeria has vestiges of the concepts and imagery of the Victorian ideal. Of course, the U.S. does, too. It was because the nineteenth century educator had a dream of a Sir Galahad seeking the way to the Holy Grail that the image of the way, the road, the course became associated with learning. Thomas Jefferson had earlier suggested that an educational program be called "a circle of instruction"[3] but "course" and "curriculum," both Latin variants for "road," became the accepted terms.

While an official in the church, the Professor gave mellifluous oral readings from the Bible, but he marks down the variations from school-English in the sermons as if the word variants, themselves, broke any mystical bonds the word might have with truth. The occasion of his forced departure from the church was his teaching the Yoruba mythology of the rainbow to his Sunday School class. The way in which he describes his life since leaving the church suggests the beauty of the experience which 'the Word" had for him. Nostalgically he says,

> That was not the word you see. . .no it was not. . .and I left the Word hanging in the colored light of sainted windows.

Though a priest drop-out on the surface, the inspiration of the church still moves with him in his new chapter as Professor and junkyard dealer. Appropriately, the junkyard adjoins the churchyard so that he may look through the church's half-open window to the lecturn with its eagle standing over the Bible. He says of himself

> But I must be near the Eagle, for his brazen image bore on its back the first illusion of the Word.

In the final scene, he refers to both Yoruba and Christian worship as stations of discovery in his journey of "wonder"—a "wonder" that will not let him go.

> I hold nothing against the rainbow, considering it to be good. I hold nothing against lights, against color, finding in it mists and fragments of Immanent grace on earth. But. . .I could not escape my own sense of wonder.

His conviction or his obsession is that he can find and that his lay-abouts (or his students) can find for him and with him the awareness of the mystical substance of "the Word" which fulfills all "wonder", if they participate in another's experience as he passes from life into death. Of the Professor, it is said,

> He lures Kotonu to a recent accident, saying I have a new wonder to show you—a shower of crystals flying on broken souls

The Professor, himself, says,

> The word comes from departed souls when ascent is broken and a winged secret plummets back to earth

His faith in a "progress" which will lead to the wholeness of an epiphany is expressed early in the play.

> Every discovery is a sign post. . .eventually the revelation will stand naked and unashamed.

At the end of the play, he calls himself "a gleaner" and his quest is more an expectancy that "the Word" by grace may come to him than that he will find it by his own conscious intention. He says,

> I'll wet my feet on morning dew, gleaning loose words from the road and remain with the eye of the earth until the shadow of the usurping word touches my place of exile.

During the Palm Sunday ritual at the point where there is a "build-up of possession" in Murano, the Professor says

> I feel at last a true excitement of the mind and spirit as if that day had been lowered at last which I have long awaited.

Afterward—after two had died, Murano and Say Tokyo Kid—the Professor puts into words his own awareness of the "revealed" truth, words which come to him as he, himself, passes from life into death. They are words not so much of discovery, however, as admonishment following a discovery. Yorubas have told me that they are like the last words of a Yoruba father to his oldest son. In these last words, the Professor counsels his spiritual sons of many cultures to nurture visions inspired in mystical moments, to "coil yourself in dreams," and to feel always about them the clustering shadows of every man in the cosmic and encompassing presence of death. His advice is not to follow "the road" to a remote Utopian destiny but to "be" the road in the greatest experience that it can give man, that of death breaking into life. His faith is that a hand dipped in holy water will find there the response of another hand and man with man will become united as one.

> Be even like the road itself. Flatten your bellies with the hunger of an unpropitious day, power your hands with the knowledge of death. In the heat of the afternoon when the sheen raises false forests and a watered haven, let the event first unravel before your eyes. Or in the dust when ghost lorries pass you by, and your shouts, your tears fall on deaf panels and the dust swallows them. Dip in the same basin as the man that makes his last journey and stir with one finger, wobbling reflections of two hands, two hands, but one face only. . .Coil yourself in dreams. . .Spread a broad sheet for death with the length and the time of the sun between you until the one face multiplies and the one shadow is cast by all the doomed. Breathe like the road. Be even like the road itself.

The Professor's "progress" has ranged from the rainbow to the eagle to the road. With "the shadow of the usurping word" falling upon him, he knows "at last a true excitement of the mind and spirit." The spider and its prey which Samson periodically observes during the play moves here from the image of the entrapped worshipper (who cannot escape the "wonder' of Ogun any more than a fly in its web can escape the

spider) to the crisis image which Soyinka writes on the fly leaf of his poem, "Idanre":[4]

Such webs as these we build our dreams upon
To quiver lightly and to fly
The sun comes down in stately visit
The spider feeds him pearls.

The flame of Ogun's visitation is still in Soyinka's brain when he writes "Idanre." As "The Road" begins with a linear quest image and adds a crisis image (heaven reaching down as earth reaches up) and a circle image "coil yourself in dreams," so "Idanre" begins with an Ogun, who is "godfather of the road" and who brings mystical revelations, and ends with an Ogun, forger of the Mobius ring. The "progress" in the poem as in the play is reflected in the imagery.

Soyinka's play leaves with the reader (who is seeking analogies in it with education) the image that learning is a road which, at no predetermined time, may reach an experience where old meanings break, and new meanings—through words—open the "portals" to the revelations of Ogun. In that experience or as a result of it, all comes together as "the circle of instruction" which Jefferson imagined as the central educational image. These great days of revelation come not by effort alone but by grace superseding effort. They come to, perhaps, by being as sensitive as the Professor was to the possibility of there being a Murano in every group—in every person—mute and limping because one foot rests on the slumbering chrysalis of the word."

The lesser characters in the play show the results of not living with such integrity as the Professor. Salubi trades in forged licenses. Other lay-abouts trade in used parts of cars—wrecked cars. The most promising of them is the ex-driver, Kotonu, who has faltered at the risks of the road and is surreptitiously turning into just another collector of used car parts. Samson is the slick salesman who would not, the Professor says, recognize the Resurrection if he saw it. Samson is thus too insensitive to perceive that Murano limps.

Analogies between educational practices and the activities of the characters will occur to teachers and students: for example, an analogy between grades and drivers' licenses. Grades are at best but approximations of worth and at worst no better than the forged licenses which the Professor helps Salubi to make. The difference between the driver of his own car and the one who merely pieces together a composite car from the parts of other drivers' cars may suggest the parallel between the creative thinker-writer and the mere collector and compositor of other people's words.

The play is a critique of western education in general and in particular an indictment of the form it has taken in Nigeria. At the same time, it is an affirmation of the power of "the Word" to give winged strength to the soul of man that man may change. The Professor in his sad dark-pocket society seeks to break bonds and find, among all ideals, the imperative ideal. The Professor lives as if only the one who seeks "the Word" in the mystical never-before-said ever moves or changes his life in a real sense, such change coming from a part dying, a part giving birth. For artist and interpreter, "the smear of blood on the brain" is the sign of discovery, of creation, the cross of Resurrection. The residue of the discovery, of the Resurrection, is "the Word." "A Tower of words in my sanctuary," the Professor says. The cycle of sun and night measures earth-time but man-time is measured by the stays and releases which

"the Word" affords him. In his pilgrimage, the Professor is sometimes visited by the assisting presences of the Yoruba spirits, "egungun," sometimes touched by "the mists and fragments of Immanent grace." The reader following his "progress" can not escape his own "sense of wonder."

That man's reach for knowing extends into the realm where the unknown and unknowable meet is also a theme in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*. In this novel, the setting is the bicultural society of the Ibo and British in eastern Nigeria during the early 1920's. Ezeulu, the Ibo priest of Ulu, seeks "the brinks of knowing"; the British assistant administrator, Tony Clarke, speculates on "the nature of knowledge."

The setting of the novel is the old Nigeria where people lived in small settlements and went to their outlying farm plots to plant and harvest their yams. The two villages where the characters in the novel live are Umuaro and Okperi, six miles apart. Umuaro has been a village confederation for seven generations under the protection of the god, Ulu, and his hereditary priests. Okperi is an even older community. Shortly before the story begins, a mission has been started in Umuaro. Ten years earlier, the British established Captain Winterbottom as District Officer in Okperi. In Umuaro, the domestic life of Ezeulu with his wives, children, relatives and friends centers in Ezeulu's compound. The life of the villagers is pictured when they come together for the religious celebrations and political assemblies which alternate in the novel and measure out the year of its action. The story is told with flashbacks and forecasts so that the effect is a rounded and well-meshed coherence of interrelated characters and events.

Students will admire the strong-willed priest, who in the opening scene, half in boyhood fear, watches for the new moon to come to "the door" of the sky. As a result of such sacred vigils, he has the power to set the planting and harvesting seasons of his people. This first night, the mystery of his priesthood takes hold of him so that as the moon rises overhead, his fear lies "on the ground in the grip of the joy". A strong physical wrestler as a young man, he remains a strong psychic wrestler as priest and leader of his people. Ezeulu is of heroic stature and though tragedy befalls him, he never loses the dignity of his greatness. Of him it was said he was half mmo (or spirit) and half man. "And half of all the things he did was from the spirit side." Ezeulu in his high seriousness sought the limits of man's knowing this "spirit side." His responsibility as a man is increased by his responsibility as a leader. "Not content with shallow satisfactions" or shallow responsibilities, he seeks "the brinks of knowing" looking for that extra power which should be his as leader of his people. Because of the magnitude of his position, when he fails, it is fatal to his community.

His British counterpart, Winterbottom, is a less forceful man, occasionally neurotic, but an honorable administrator with some good, some faulty perceptions of "his natives." His assistant, Tony Clarke, is the one who meditates on "the nature of knowledge" and comes to the conclusion that knowledge of the "facts" about a person brings a sense of "responsibility" for that person.

Social-minded students will respond to the picture of cultures-in-contact which the novel gives. British and Ibo meet with a mixture of responses. At the climax of the book, Achebe lays out in matched parallels the British and Ibo misunderstandings of each other. Ezeulu's duty as Chief Priest is to be the time-keeper of Umuaro, yet Winterbottom scoffs at the Ibos' lack of sense of time. Oduche, similarly makes a

cultural mis-match, when he supposes killing a royal python will make him a more confirmed Christian. Part of the satire of the novel is its play on cultural ignorances and incongruities which the reader sees but the characters are blind to.

Achebe, however, is not hopeless of one culture's eventual understanding of another. His counsel is to accept the condition that the understanding of another comes gradually. The white man is "like hot soup, to be sipped slowly-slowly." The Chief Priest of Umuaro is also "not a soup you can lick in a hurry." Disorientation in a foreign setting is as natural to one culture group as to another. Tony Clarke feels so estranged in Umuaro that even the sun looks unfamiliar. Okperi seems so alien to Ezeulu that the moon does not look like his moon. The understanding of others' ways begins to come when a man moves from the viewpoint of his own cultural setting for a look at others. Ezeulu says knowledge of the world is "like a Mask dancing." If you are going to see what it is really like, you have to follow it as it dances, circling when it circles. He sends Oduche to the mission church with these words:

> I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share. The world is like a Mask dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place.

The novel stresses the welfare-in-common all men have the responsibility for providing and protecting. As the wealth of every Ibo, when he buys a prestigious "title," is distributed to the whole community, so the knowledge of every man, as he gains it, is to be shared and used for the good of other men. Oduche was charged by his father, Ezeulu, to go to the mission church and be his "eye and ear" there and then to bring home "his share" of any good that was to be found. Oduche fails a moral obligation to his father and his community when it becomes clear that he has not shared with his father his knowledge of the church's ways and activities. With special opportunities for knowledge come special responsibilities for using it for the good of others. This sharing keeps people equal in the "alliance" of one to the other. An Ibo saying in the novel is that no man however great is "ever greater than his people." The people of Umuaro also remind each other of their reponsibility to each other by such proverbs as

> The fly who has no one to advise it follows the corpse into the ground.
> A man does not leave his goat tethered at the time of its parturition.

The novel suggests that even more important for a man than learning to be an assertively great man is learning to have a sense of "the common house"[5] in which he lives with his brothers and in which all men live together. The novel shows how leaders lose out as keepers of "the common house" and how in the vacuum left another leader, perhaps not so well qualified, takes over but the people go on. The values of their common heritage are not lost but safe in the hands of the Nwodika's, the Ezekwisili's, the Tony Clarke's. Nor is it just the leaders that destroy the community life; it is the little acts of disloyalty and back-biting of any member of the group that sap social strength. These are "the ant-infested faggots" in the house bringing in the lizards. Anyone reading this book puts it down with a renewed sense of the ethical imperatives in the human contract as the necessary conditions for fulfilling the idealistic imperative of the cosmic one. Knowledge is knowing oneself well enough

and knowing the code of "good wisdom," as Ezeulu would say, so as not to destroy another in a tense moment of anger as Akukalia, or in a relaxed moment of gossip as Matefi, or in an excess of partisanship as Nwaka. Contentiousness is characteristic of the Ibos in this novel, but it is not to get out of hand. The society that "loves itself" is juxtaposed to the society that "abuses itself." Contentiousness is out of hand when the latter happens.

Some students may ask about the title of the novel. At the time Ulu speaks to him, Ezeulu conjectures that he is "an arrow in the bow of his god." The imagery is not new in the novel, the dibia of Okperi having been called "The Bow that Shoots to the Sky." The English-speaking reader is familiar with the arrow as a symbol of connection between god and man in the worship of Jehovah in the Old Testament. Perhaps Achebe's father, Isaiah, to whom the novel is dedicated, may have reminded his son of that earlier arrow of God, the Isaiah of the Old Testament. The image may have a special Ibo meaning, too. "The arrow of god" may be another way of saying "the chi of Chukwu." The chi is the sun's ray sent to every man at the time of his birth by the great creator god, Chukwu, who lives behind the sun. A man's chi creates his soul and is his personal god throughout life. The chi half dominates, half accedes to a man's will. Sometimes, the mind of a Umuaro man is restless with the ambiguity of his relationship with his chi. Nwaka said "When a man says 'yes', his chi says 'yes' ", but Ezeulu said "No man can go against his chi." Towards the end of the novel, Akuebue makes the foreboding prophecy that the chi ordains death. "Possession' of man by spirit is perhaps never complete or perhaps only complete in death—or maybe that is not the important question. In two poems entitled "Question" and "Answer," Achebe pictures the chi of men as rays of the sun. In "Question," he pictures the chi's as sunbeams gyrating inharmoniously—unconnected—in slanting rays of sunlight. In "Answer," after the source that "fed the turbulence" is "quenched," the chi's are pictured as a harmonious order of heaven touching earth, a "rainbow broom of sunlight." Following are the passages from the two poems in which he describes his vision of the chi's, the first from "Question," the second from "Answer":[6]

> Are these your creatures
> these crowding specks
> stomping your lighted corridor
> to a remote sun, like doped
> acrobatic angels gyrating
> at needlepoint to divert a high
> unamused god?
> I
> flung open long-disused windows
> and doors and saw my hut
> new-swept by rainbow brooms
> of sunlight become my home again
> on whose trysting floor waited
> my proud vibrant life.

As an expression which may have a double reference alluding to both cultures in the novel, "Arrow of God" makes a fitting title.

As an epithet for Ezeulu, it also may have a double reference. Although he does

not so recognize it, the symbol of the arrow with which Ezeulu identifies himself is, as we have just seen, similar to the Ibo symbol for the chi. Perhaps his imagining himself as an arrow drew him closer to the time when he might recognize that his chi came from Chukwu that it was not an unconnected spirit but drew its life from the greatest source. In his last dream, he hears the voice of the royal python, sacred to Idemili, the rain god, whom "no man made." His hearing the voice suggests that the power of Ulu, the god whom the men of Umuaro "made" seven generations ago is fading away. It seems that Achebe might be saying here that even at moments of great earthly failure and error for an individual, there are inklings of regeneration in him. So in reference to Ezeulu, "the arrow of God" may be a symbol partly of failure, partly of hope.

Students will not find *Arrow of God* as easy to read as conventional British and American novels. In *Arrow of God*, Achebe seems more intent on making an English which is reflective of Ibo culture than he is of continuing British traditions of literary style. He often uses Ibo words as when at the rising of the moon the children outside Ezeulu's obi chant "Onwa atuo. . .Onwa atuo." The imagery of Ibo idioms is translated in such expressions as: "his ear nailed up" against listening, "words that he did not bite," "water that sticks to his teeth."

Characteristic of Achebe's general style in this novel is an understated recording of actuality—the resonance of which comes gradually when one thinks about it later. An example is this description of the half-light of the forest after the moon's "visit":

> The new moon having shown itself retired again. But the night bore marks of its visit. The darkness was not so impenetrable as it had been lately but open and airy like a forest from which the undergrowth had been cut.

His words leave the mind to complete the image.

Sometimes distinctive rhythms mark out certain passages from the general discourse as that telling of Ezeulu's meditation of old age—his grandfather's and his own. The rhythm attracts the attention of the reader so that at first he does not observe that the words are not put together in conventionally idiomatic English. The first sentence has a rugged strong beat in contrast to the smooth lyric sweep of the second sentence. The abrupt staccato of the third sentence makes an effective change from the flowing rhythm of the second sentence and a sharply defined conclusion to the passage:

> Ezeulu did not like to think that his sight was no longer as good as it used to be and that some day he would have to rely on someone else's eyes as his grandfather had done when his sight failed. Of course he had lived to such a great age that his blindness became like an ornament on him. If Ezeulu lived to be so old, he too would accept such a loss.

As in the prose of Joseph Conrad who spoke Polish as his first language, so in the prose of Achebe who speaks Ibo as his first language, we sometimes hear a melody different from the British and American speech-tunes we are accustomed to. Achebe's skill in bringing off a British-sounding style as well as an Ibo-like style can be illustrated by two parallel passages, one in which he introduces Ezeulu (Chapter I) and the other in which he introduces Winterbottom (Chapter III). The following are the

first five sentences of each portrait. To accentuate the parallelism, I have written both spaced according to their phrase segments and divided into four stanzas.

EZEULU

This was the third night fall
since he began to look for signs of the new moon.
He knew it would come today
but he always began his watch three days early
because he must not take a risk.

In this season of the year
his task was not too difficult;
he did not have to peer and search the sky
as he might do when the rainy season came.

Then the new moon hid itself for days
behind rain clouds
so that when it finally came out
it was already half-grown.

And while it played its game
the Chief Priest sat up every evening waiting.

WINTERBOTTOM

Captain T. K. Winterbottom stood at the veranda
of his bungalow on Government Hill
to watch the riot of the year's first rain.
For the past month or two
the heat had been building up to an unbearable pitch.

The grass had long been burned out
and the leaves of the more hardy trees
had taken on the red and brown earth color of the country.

There was only two hours respite in the morning
before the country turned into a furnace
and perspiration came down in little streams
from the head and neck.

The most exasperating was the little stream
that always coursed down behind the ear like a fly walking.

The style describing the British Winterbottom flows in familiar rhythms and refers to familiar sensibilities, images and customs. The style describing Ezeulu sings like a song and what the words say seems less important than the way they are fitted together as sounds. In comparison to the Winterbottom passage the description of Ezeulu is a low-keyed understatement directed more to registering actuality than to expressing psychic distress and wording superlatives in various ways. The designation of Winter-

NOTES

[1]Achebe, Chinua. *Arrow of God*. Rev. Ed. (London, Heinemann, 1974). First published 1964.
[2]in Soyinka, Wole. *Collected Plays* 1. (London, Oxford, 1973). First published 1965.
[3]in a "P.S." dated 1825 appended to his 1818 proposal to the faculty of the University of Virginia that Anglo-Saxon be taught.
[4]in Soyinka, Wole. *Idanre* (London, Methuen, 1967).
[5]An expression used in the folk tale *How the Leopard Got his Claws* by Chinua Achebe and John Ironganachi (New York. The Third Press, 1973).
[6]in Achebe, Chinua. *Christmas in Biafra*... (Garden City, Doubleday, 1973).

Student, schizophrenic

A. In her fierce, small bursts
of that bright center-self,
she burns me—making my
skin (love's brain) twitch back
from unpleasant, deep flame.
Tugging at me as I move
about later, my scabs itch.
She has effectively wounded.
ttttrough fire.

B. I consider her sweet flares.
What can these matchlights
mean as they strike, strike
my life? She thinks it insanity
but her oxygen builds the heat
and she sees me clearly through fire.

Cindy Hoffman
Olathe

bottom at the beginning of the first sentence starts a cadence with stress on the first part of a sentence which follows through to the end of the passage. The designation of Ezeulu as Chief Priest comes at the end of the passage and the cadence throughout this passage is marked by stress coming at the end of sentences. Both passages conclude with a couplet stanza, each with a present participle as the final stressed word. These passages are but a part of the extended parallel introductions Achebe composes for the two men.

With these portrait passages coupling these two men as in a diptych, Achebe sets the pattern of telling his story by parallelisms and repetitions of various kinds. Sometimes they come in two's; sometimes they run like arpeggios through the novel, giving it unexpected harmonies of meaning. It depends on the reader's perceptions of what these parallelisms and repetitions are and of how they pattern as to the meanings he finds. Students will enjoy looking for wordings and allusions that correspond and drawing inference from them. A student may, for example, notice that in the assemblies at the time of the Okperi land controversy, Ezeulu twice quotes the proverb condemning the master who keeps his she-goat tethered at the time she bears her young. They may notice that he never again quotes this pathernalistic proverb. When it is not Ezeulu but an elder by the name of Ezekwisili, meaning "king-worthy," who later says this proverb, they may infer that his ofo or staff of leadership of Umuaro has slipped from Ezeulu's fingers. As the proverbs are carriers of wisdom for the Ibo people, so they are carriers of the wisdom of the novel and in the patterns that their repetitions make, signal the structures and meaning in the novel. Though a non-Ibo reader will never expect to discover their full meaning, a thoughtful study of them helps him begin to see that in this novel "where something stands something else stands beside it."

Repetitions, parallels, contrasts are traditional ways of composing oral literary forms. Achebe's use of these devices may, therefore, show the imprint of his Ibo literary heritage as his style shows the imprint of his Ibo language. Once, when asked about the oral literary tradition of the Ibo he said that the greatest of the Ibos' literary arts is rhetoric which he described as the art by which the important consensus of the people was won in their very democratically run assemblies. Presented dramatically by Achebe, the political assemblies in the novel make good scenes for acting out in class.

Though Achebe and Soyinka are very different as artists and reflect very different cultural and philosophical viewpoints, they both create, in their writings, temples of knowing which it is anyone's loss not to visit. Study of these authors will enrich any class with their humane and broadly cultural concepts of knowledge. They address themselves to the person a man must know himself to *be* so that being that person he may give a wise and harmonious order to the things he must *do* in "the common house" of man. They show that in his outreach, man always takes the risk of life itself, feels the "smear of blood on the brain" as the Professor said, "dares" to test, as Ezeulu did, the footing at "the brinks of knowing." They help their readers to make "the imaginative leap" across the threshold of a foreign culture and so to live within a different world, be it Yoruba or Ibo, that even though the sun and moon look unfamiliar, man's responsiveness to man is awakened.

AMERINDIAN POETRY

VINCENT GILLESPIE
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Surprising it's not—that the American schools have ignored the literature of the Amerindian. It's been there all the time—begging attention, deserving enthusiasts. We have had the opportunity. Our only excuse is that having dismissed its creators as wild, savage aborigines, we could not be expected to view their cultural expressions as significant of study. One can almost hear us say, "The only good Indian poem is a dead one." It's been our loss.

Things may be looking up, however. The Indian rights movement of the late 1960's and 1970's has reminded us that the Amerindian is, however assertively, a man seeking dignity in a culture that accepts him only to the extent that he denies his cultural patrimony. And that movement has stimulated our interest in the man, himself. He is an anomaly to us. We are proud of our achievement; he reminds us what barbarity purchased it. We exalt material progress; he questions our very use of the term. We define man as the creature with sovereignty over the earth, to make it bloom or, if we wish, to despoil it; he sees himself as one with the deer, the flower, as a man in brotherhood with all creation. Not to modern conservationists alone, is the Amerindian emerging as someone other than a savage whose time has come and gone. We are beginning to understand that his world view is not less than ours but rather one which is different and one that is worthy of note. The Amerindian's perspective is different. In that difference there may be an answer or two. There may even lie insights into our own nature.

That is part of my interest in this essay. I would call the teacher's attention to the possibilities that exist in Amerindian literature for our students to more fully understand the universe in which they find themselves. More specifically, I suggest that our literature classes examine Amerindian poetry to discover in it a different voice, a different ordering of time and experience. Our students will find it interesting. They will learn much about language. They will, hopefully, discover that their own ethnocentrically determined perspectives must be tempered with awareness and tolerance.

Amerindian "poetry" is, in a sense, a misnomer. At least it must be a term used cautiously, for "poetry" in the European sense was not written by the Amerindian. Until European influences were felt there were, for instance, no individual poets, *per se*. Nor was poetry an act divorced from social or religious experience. In a very severe sense, poetry as *words alone* did not exist. Simply to understand the distinction, to know intellectually what the Amerindian felt about his expression is valuable for our students. It involves the view the Amerindian had of existence itself. (One should be wary here. It is unwise to generalize about the Amerindian. After all, when Columbus stepped ashore there were more than two thousand tribes in North America employing more than fifty mutually unintelligible languages. Though much cultural similarity existed, such differences, of course, meant considerable cultural and

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philosophic diversity.) Perhaps a description of that view of existence is a good place to begin.

The Amerindian's universe was god-centered. The primal cause and directive influence over all spiritual existence was almost always a consciousness that could permeate all matter and alone giving meaning to life. To be separate from such organicness was to be devoid of identity. The Yokuts of California expressed the concern clearly.

My words are tied in one
With the great mountains,
With the great rocks,
With the great trees,
In one with my body
And my heart.
Do you all help me
With supernatural power,
And you, Day
And you, Night!
All of you see me
One with this world.[1]

It is with this organicness that the individual recognized he must merge. The quest of the Amerindian's life was to establish "oneness" with the universe and to act always in accord with it. He justified his own life, the life of his society, and the forms of the institutions of that society on the grounds that each exemplified the character of such spiritual unity.

The path to such identity was invariably self-denial, was one of divorcing oneself from one's materiality. The Amerindian's capacity for physical privation, legendary in frontier literature, is symbolic of the view he held of his physicalness. It was the least important aspect of his being, and it could be shed, however figuratively to the unbelieving, as totally as one might shed clothing. It mattered little if the Amerindian went without food for days at a time or lived relatively exposed to wind and cold if, in doing so, he could transport himself beyond his bodiliness. Stoicism is never without purpose.

For the Amerindian, then, the task was to gain entrance into Oneness. The task could be accomplished only if he held the key—the key to ultimate reality.

Let me see, if this be real,
Let me see, if this be real,
Let me see, if this be real,
Let me see, if this be real,
This life I am living?
Ye who possess the skies,
Let me see if this be real,
This life I am living. (Spinden, p. 13)

It was the search for each individual's key that gave rise to what is called Amerindian poetry, for that poetry is the key itself.

One power only could subdue all, could stand above and before the gods themselves And that was the *Word*. To the Amerindian, words were power. The word existed before creation, it could bestow strength and love, it could heal, it could give life itself. It existed as an independent entity. What we call his poetry was the Amerindian's conceptualization and manipulation of the word. Arthur G. Day in *The Sky Clears* is succinct. "The main purpose of poetry among the Indians. . .was to get hold of the sources of supernatural power, to trap the universal mystery in a net of magical words."[2] The power of those words, too, is seen in the comment of the Navajo who

remarked, "I have always been a poor man. I do not know a single song."[3] And the Amerindian could not avoid that power.

I am ashamed before the earth
I am ashamed before the heavens;
I am ashamed before the dawn;
I am ashamed before the evening twilight;
I am ashamed before the blue sky;
I am ashamed before the sun.
I am ashamed before that standing within me
which speaks to me. (Astrov, p. 3)

(Here the importance of the *word* is also structurally evident. The first six lines are three "couplets." A typical device, each expresses wholeness by pairings opposites, i.e., earth/heavens, dawn/twilight, sky/sun). Only the speaker's conscience, his *word* "standing within" is "oneness" itself and capable of standing alone.)

To be sure, the Amerindian did not seek to avoid the word. The Amerindian of the Southwest sought to discover his word in drug-induced hallucinations. The Plains Amerindian sought his at puberty. When the time came, he went alone for days of fasting and praying and, when overcome by hunger and weakness, he too hallucinated. In such induced visions, he beheld existence in shapeless, shifting forms and within those forms a compelling image. It was that image and its actions that became his "medicine," and his *word* was the verbal symbol of that medicine. An Amerindian friend of Margot Astrov commented to her, "Everyone who is prosperous or successful must have dreamed of something. It is not because he is a good worker that he is prosperous, but because he dreamt." (Astrov, p. 3)

And the word was the individual's property. He could forbid others to use it. He could give it to a friend or bequeath it to others. If he chose, he could forever hold it to him and take it with him at his death. Doubtless, too, it was such words possessed by singular individuals that became the totemic words of Amerindian clans and tribes. (Frequently, members of different tribes but of clans holding the same words in common shared greater kinship than they did with members of their own tribe.) Too, the individual or the group could have a variety of words covering the span of time and activities. There were words for hunting and planting, for birth and death, for love and for enmity—for, that is, whatever carried importance.

The word existed, then, as verbal symbol, as an "oralgraph," used to recreate the medicine experience and, so, to recapture the individual's or the group's power over physical reality. It was not, for example, the medicine man's herb which could heal; rather, it was the verbal formula which accompanied it that saved the patient. The Chippewa woman who employed

What are you saying to me?
I am arrayed like the roses
And beautiful as they. . .(Day, p. 152).

was not appealing to her lover so much as compelling him. And the compulsion was exercised by the woman's creating, for herself, the experience of love-success. The man could not resist because it was *her* experience that she created. (Since this love charm was universal among the Chippewas, it must have been rather effective.)

This belief in the power of the word is sufficient to account for the enormous

differences which set off Amerindian "poetry" from European. In a sense, what seems to be poetry to the modern reader is rather a verbal setting encasing the word in its multitudinous forms. Amerindian poetry is essentially the self-fulfillment of self-consciousness, be it the individual's or the group's. The poem was valued primarily for the effect it produced upon the singer rather than upon his audience. It did not seek the responsiveness of others; it invoked states of feeling and of consciousness in the poet. The poem was for the poet, as Austin put it,". . .a shorthand note to his emotions, a sentence or two, a phrase out of the heart of the situation [the vision]. It is the 'inside song' alone which is important."[4]

Out of this sense, then, came the vast bulk of Amerindian poetry. Such determined also its salient characteristics. The poetry, regardless of its individualized inception, was primarily communal. Invariably, too, it was socially functional and occasional. Sung or shouted, its rhythms were, at first glance, seemingly structured on alternate drum beats, but at second glance, were seen to be constructed of extraordinarily complicated variations of stress and pitch patterns imposed upon the beats. Though generally and relatively brief, many took hours to recite—a few even days. The verse was repetitive, frequently replete with nonsense sounds both to regularize rhythms and to alter stress patterns. It employed archaisms, terse metaphor, personification of both animate life and inanimate objects, parallelism, contrast, a preponderance of nouns, monotony, apostrophe, euphony, and onomatopoeia.

Four examples will demonstrate, in part, the range of compositional types. First, though, an important digression should be noted.

Almost all of the Amerindian poetry which is readily available to the reader has been translated by scholars whose purposes differed widely. Ethnologists considered it most responsible if their work was more than a literal translation. Frequently they attempted to capture the total cultural setting which gave importance to the poem. Note, for instance, this translation of the first stanza of a Pawnee song:

> Tirawa harken! mighty one,
> Above us is the blue silent sky!
> We standing wait thy bidding here.
> The Mother Corn standing waits,
> Waits to serve thee here;
> The Mother Corn stands waiting here.

The original stanza is mostly a repetition of a single line:

> Mother, now I standing, hold. (Spinden, p. 65)

The difference lay in the translator's desire to offer the reader the single line in its setting. The singer delivered the line as part of ceremony in which the objects held by the singer, their color, and their form were symbols understood by other participants in the ceremony. The translator, thus, placed the original verse in what was considered its most meaningful context. And more elaborate "license" can be found. Some translators attempted to convey verbally the rhythms of the music which accompanied the poem. Others tried, also, to translate, or at least to approximate, the vocables used to fill out rhythmic patterns.

What one most frequently faces, then, is Amerindian poetry that has been freely translated. One, no doubt sins in the eyes of the purist, but if he is not motivated as the

linguist or the ethnologist, then he can accept and even be thankful for the labors of the judicious and imaginative translator.

The four examples, then:

Song to the Pleiades

Look as they rise, rise
Over the line where sky meets the earth
Pleiades!

Lo! They ascending, come to guide us,
Leading us safely, keeping us one
Pleiades,

Teach us to be, like you, united. (Day, p. 100)

Dream Song

At night may I roam,
Against the winds may I roam,
At night may I roam,
When the owl is hooting may I roam.

At dawn may I roam,
Against the winds may I roam,
At dawn may I roam
When the cow is calling may I roam. (Day p. 104)

The Bush Is Singing

The bush is sitting
under a tree
and singing. (Austin, p. 359)

Ravening Coyote

Ravening coyote comes,
red hands, red mouth
neĉklace of eyeballs![5]

The four examples demonstrate to a considerable extent the psychological range of Amerindian poetry. There were, of course, other forms, but they would be a consideration for purposes other than such an essay as this. Amerindian poetry included forms analogous to the epic, the ode, the love lyric, the lament—indeed, it included all states of expression though they differed in form from European poetry.

The "Song to the Pleiades" is, of the four, clearly the most ceremonial and communal. Chanted by the Pawnees, the most intensely isolated and friendless of the Plains Amerindians, the poem in its personification and apostrophe expresses on one level both fear and deliverance. The poem begins not necessarily as a description of the rising of the Pleiades; rather, the poem may be recited at any time of tribal crises. It is, in effect, the recitation of the vision experience itself, the giving of the "magic words" which would ensnare the power of the Pleiades and guarantee to the Pawnees that the constellation's cited characteristic—unity—would be assured for the Pawnee nation. Important in the poem is the parallelism that accentuates the poem's emphasis on unity. The second verse, "Over the line where sky meets the earth" is, in its

mention of the male aspect of the universe (sky) and the female (earth) an attempt to express metaphorically the explicit need denoted by the poem. The notion is again expressed in the corresponding line of the second stanza as the Pawnee join the Pleiad sisters.

"Dream Song" again demonstrates the emphasis on parallelism—rather obvious in its repetition of rhythm and thought structure. But this is not a communal poem. Intensely personal, the poem shows the singer's reliance upon two of his personal animal gods. The loneliness of the individual in his roaming (his life search) "against the winds" (a frequent symbol of universal chaos somewhat akin to "whirlwind"—the chants of the Ghost Dance warriors, for instance, picture the whirlwind sweeping all White men before it and ridding the land of them) finds answer in his identity with the owl and the crow—two birds which are often rejected by the Plains Amerindians as uncompromising, alien spirits. Here the singer, for whatever psychological reason, has expressed his isolation from nature and, at the same time, his unity with the very alien forces that he would otherwise feel no kinship to. Even in physical isolation, the singer finds unity and oneness.

The third example is a verbal "pictograph." Rather common, such poems were used not for their lyric expression alone, but because they could distill the essence of an entire experience. Such poems, by their very graphicness and concision were also used to recount orally, as emotionally as necessary, the tales recounted in the written language of pictographs. Many are found as refrains in much lengthier song chains as well.

The last poem is, of the four, the purest example of an oralgraph—a concise expression that recreates the essential details of an Amerindian's medicine dream. Induced by hallucinations, the dream depicted a ravenous coyote, mouth and paws dripping with gore, envisioned within a shifting panorama of its victims' eyes. For him the vision was indicative of The Coyote's willingness to become him when he needed such character. Indeed, in his singing his poem, he became the ravenous coyote itself. The imagery is striking, of course, and even, to us, barbaric, but in the context of Amerindian culture it is explicable. The *ravening* coyote is an animal of altered characteristics since the coyote is generally depicted as mischievous or sly or wise. And as the singer wishes for his own altered state, so too does he wish to wear about his neck the trophies of courage and fearlessness. The grotesque, barbarous nature of the image is our perspective.

The four examples, then, give some sense of the range of viewpoints the Amerindian brought to his expression. Of course, he could sing on any and all occasions. There were poems of petition, of adoration, of love. He could sing his tribe's history or recount the significant moments of his own life. There were songs for hunting, fasting, planting, games, gambling, or war. He could instill moral precepts in his children or chastize his wife (or be chastized by her). He could, if he chose, sing out his life as did the Sioux in a song of death:

The odor of death
I discern the odor of death
In the front of my body.

It may even have been imperative. The sense is felt in "Song of the Spirit-Dance":

Thus the Father saith,

Lo, he now commandeth
All on earth to sing,
To sing now.
Thus he hath spoken
Thus he hath spoken.
Tell afar his message,
Tell afar his message.

The glance has been but brief. In a short essay one can do little more than hint at the character of Amerindian poetry. Certain it is that one's own investigation would be rewarding and satisfying. But the flavor is here, and some advantages for the student are implicit. A brief study of the poetry is worthwhile, and if it is accompanied by an examination of Amerindian folktales and philosophy, the student will gain from it all. And it may be started at any level. There are, for instance, play songs for many Indian games that children will enjoy on the playground. Indian attitudes toward conservation and the use of nature are frequently implicit in the poetry and folktales. Such will be worthwhile contributions to beginning science studies. Much history from an obviously different viewpoint than that most students encounter can be found in the poetry. Westward migration of both Whites and Amerindians, government treaties and programs, and territorial disputes are all seen differently when viewed from the Amerindian's perspective.

And language studies may be enhanced. The devices of Amerindian poetry and the rhetoric of their prose speeches will enable the student to view, comparatively, similar devices in English. The Amerindian's theory of language in a semanticist's treasure in its extraordinary contrast to European attitudes. The student can also be introduced by his interest in the language and its functions to new theories in such fields as socio-linguistics.

The point is that the field is a rich one and should be exploited. Besides that, the student may enjoy the activity. Indeed, he could well become interested in pursuing it further—even to the point of creating his poetry. If so, the Amerindian has been thoughtful enough to leave directions for the student to induce his own vision. If he is a good and patient one, he can follow this direction offered by the Eskimo: "Go to a lonely place and rub a stone in a circle on a rock for hours and days on end." And if he is a troublesome one—"Let the person who wants a vision hang himself by his neck. When his face turns purple, take him down and have him describe what he's seen."

NOTES

[1]Spinden, Herbert J., *Songs of the Tewa* (New York, 1933), p. 7.

[2]Day, Arthur G., *The Sky Clears* (New York, 1951), p. 6.

[3]Astrov, Margot, *American Indian Prose and Poetry* (Capricorn Books Edition, Toronto, 1962), p. 21.

[4]Austin, Mary, "Introduction," *American Indian Poetry*, ed. George St. Cronyn (New York, 1943), p. xxi.

[5]Rothenberg, Jerome, *Shaking the Pumpkin* (New York, 1972), p. 275.

From A Reading Desk

A QUESTION OF POWER, Bessie Head (Pantheon Books, Random House, 1974), $6.95

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A couple of years ago a *Time* story on the "new" African woman featured several pages of photographs of well-dressed, well-coiffed, well-educated ladies strolling in urban settings. Africa, it implied, is becoming just like us. But on a continent where ninety percent of the people are subsistence farmers or herders, and where the very thought of a "career" is, for the common man, only a recent possibility, women have little or no chance of self-fullfillment outside the hut. And nowhere else is this more clearly evident than in literature: anyone with a passing acquaintance with recent South African writing, for example, would know of Ezekiel Mphahlele, Alex la Guma, Dennis Brutus, and Lewis Nkosi; but the familiar female writers, Nadine Gordimer and Doris Lessing, are white. Africa's struggle for literacy has benefitted its women very little, and the African tradition of the "poet" as spokesman for his society make it more difficult for a female writer to be taken seriously. But times change, and African women are writing.

Bessie Head, a name not often heard in this country, may become an important African voice. Born in South Africa and trained as a primary teacher, she fled to Botswana at the time of the Censorship Act of 1963; though not yet forty, and though she works as a gardener in a farming cooperative and has only evenings to write, she has published three novels, *When Rain Clouds Gather* (1969), *Maru* (1971), and now *A Question of Power*. Political, tribal, and racial themes pervade her work, but do not control it. Her experiences under colonial and apartheid regimes have not brought her to polemicism, and she is not seeking to please the crypto-revolutionaries. She writes of people who come to recognize that the largest questions of state are beyond them, who know that once the choice of exile has been made, the individual should no longer pretend he is on the front lines of the revolution—perhaps it is a selfish choice, but each of her protagonists has decided that personal questions are most important, and self-definition as an exile is central to all Bessie Head's works. Because she has chosen not to emphasize political and racial hatred in her novels, because she is a yea-sayer in gloomy times, she will have to wait longer to be "discovered," but she deserves to be read, and her audience will find her at last.

A Question of Power should further her reputation. It is by far her most ambitious novel, exploring the spiritual crisis of a young south African "Coloured" woman in exile in Botswana. Elizabeth (the absence of a family name reflects her insecure identity) works first as a primary school teacher and then as an agriculturist for a local-industries project, and while these events provide Head with opportunities to satirize subjects as various as African men, European expatriates, and our Black Power movement, they are not crucial to the novel's design. Most of the narrative charts Elizabeth's struggle with what might best be described as "possession." Dream

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images of two men, Sello and Dan, who have in real life made powerful impressions on her, enter her mind as torturers and vie there for control. Elizabeth, a true African-alien "homo duplex," and now a racial and national outsider in Botswana, has been pressed too far, yet Head's study of her character shows that the nervous breakdowns are self-induced, that regression is a form of evasion. In the accounts of repeated descents into a personal hell, the novel expends its abundant energies, making Elizabeth's characterization deep and memorable, effects notably absent in Head's first two novels.

In *When Rain Clouds Gather*, Makhaya Maseko, another protagonist-exile, knew the goal of his search the day he entered Botswana: "One road might lead to fame and importance, and another might lead to peace of mind. It's the road of peace of mind that I'm seeking." Perhaps Head realized that she removed all tension from Makhaya's situation by letting him know too much too soon; she denies Elizabeth knowledge of any goal, and in this novel defines exile as more a spiritual than a political condition. Elizabeth must learn this definition; although Head devotes almost no time to her protagonist's South African past, the narrative hints at involvement with futile public causes, and at an obsession to do violence to the victimizer. During one long nightmare, Medusa, Sello's accomplice, shrieks, "You always wanted my power. Now you have felt it." In the same dream, Sello teaches, "Be ordinary," and neither Elizabeth nor the reader understands till the very end how important that prescription is.

But the strength of the novel, its intensive study of a diseased mind, is also its weakness: the nightmare world of Sello and Dan occupies too much of the narrative, and its cruelties become repetitive. No matter how outrageous are the flights of insanity, they lose force because Head ignores two very important aspects of the "real world" that would complement and accentuate the horror of the dreams: Elizabeth's actual realationships with Sello and Dan (summarized in a few sentences on page two), and her life in South Africa, which originally undermined her sanity. Curiously, Elizabeth's waking hours in the novel are accounts of events only marginally relevant to the main theme of how to live the good life. Kenosi, her field-hand friend, illustrates gentleness and fidelity; while Tom, a Peace Corps Volunteer and the only male not a sexual predator, shows some of the pitfalls of political naivete and provides some inadvertent humor by speaking African renditions of American slang, such as, "They don't care a hell about rapid economic development." The slack and inconsequential nature of these scenes provides a telling contrast to the guiltridden, frantic dreams Elizabeth suffers, but I don't think that effect alone justifies them.

Head's overreliance upon nightmare scenes presents another problem as well; in seeking to evoke irrational forces through a rational medium, she frequently overwrites. English is native neither to her nor to the country she lives in, and it is understandable that she has not yet acquired the skill to achieve the effects she seeks. One shortcoming is a reliance upon repetition, as though frequency and force are somehow always related (Sello is described as a "huge satanic" figure four times within two pages; the nightmares themselves come to rely on the same few effects); another is a habit of non-selective allusion (references to Al Capone, Caligula, Gulliver, Macbeth, Damocles, Huckleberry Finn and others prove the author's wealth of knowledge, but seldom add to descriptions) which culminates in this account of Dan's

attempt to seduce Elizabeth: "He made a woman feel like an ancient and knowledgeable queen of love. . .He said: 'Ah,' as though he had triumphantly acquired Pavlov's dog." Most frequent, however, is the reliance upon big words for big effects; at one point, Elizabeth cries out in agony, "Oh, this filthy environment, where men sleep with the little girls they fathered, and other horrific evils." Sometimes this hyperconsciousness about vocabulary achieves complete fuzziness: "But then how often was a society at fault and conclusions were drawn, at the end of each life in opposition to the social trends."

The stylistic faults are regrettable because they detract from the novel's sound design and the writer's great wisdom, and may put readers off. I fear that Bessie Head the artist suffers from the isolation she writes about in her fiction. I lived in rural Africa two years, and know that such an environment offers little mental stimulation. That is one of the issues Elizabeth struggles with, and in the end, when she "[falls] into the warm embrace of the brotherhood of man, because when a people wanted everyone to be ordinary it was just another way of saying men loved man," Bessie Head implies this condition is better than our destructive competition for power. I wonder how much this gardener for a village cooperative benefits as an artist from those around her; the implications of the "Be ordinary" theme seem to attack her own aspirations as a writer, and yet, paradoxically, one can find hope there, too.

The great majority of African writers enjoy the stimulation of universities and a community of fellow authors, but what they give up is obvious: immediacy. They are caught between traditions, ours of the writer as an elite figure, theirs of the writer as spokesman. A politically-conscious, revolutionary African writing from, say, Evanston, Illinois, will soon feel his roots drying up, and sense that his audience is increasingly distant from his subject. This will be true, too, of any African author who leaves the people for life in the African university. Bessie Head still has her fingers in the soil, and by making careful compromises, might combine traditions and create for herself a place in the front rank of contemporary African writers.

From The State Specialist's Desk

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On June 23, 1972, to become effective July 1, 1972, the Congress of the United States passed into law Title IX (Public Law 92-318) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, thereby outlawing sex discrimination in educational institutions receiving Federal funds and mandating a standard of sex equality that has far-reaching implications for schools at all levels. Although Federal guidelines for implementing the law have not yet been completed and distributed from Washington, the law is in effect on the basis of its own wording.

Title IX states that—

> No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

Some of the proposed rules for interpretive guidelines are disturbing to school personnel. Administrators and boards of education are faced with the requirement to provide facilities, money, and privileges for physical education and athletics for girls equal to those provided for boys. All courses and activities are to be open to students of both sexes equally, except in certain specified activities where provisions may be separate but equal.

Classroom teachers of home economics and industrial education are being requested to provide equal opportunity, encouragement, and learning activities for both boys and girls in their courses. No longer is it legal for a school receiving Federal funds to require, for example, one unit of industrial education for boys and one unit of home economics for girls. Since everyone must make some kinds of home for him- or herself, whether one lives in a mansion with a large family or under a railroad trestle with an eleemosynary coat and a can of beans—or anywhere between—the school might require a course in genuine homemaking for everyone.

Like the earlier law prohibiting discrimination regarding racial, ethnic, and other minority groups, stereotyping by group identification is considered a large part of prejudice and discrimination. Title IX thereby mandates an end to stereotyping sex roles and interests in schools. For example, no longer is it acceptagble to assume, in language, pictures, or requirements that home economics teachers are of course women, that industrial education teachers are of course men, or that students preparing for secretarial positions are of course girls. At present the interpreters of the law are being careful to avoid dealing with curriculum content lest they tangle with the First Amendment and laws that guarantee local control of public education.

Teachers of language arts would like to assume that they are safe from possible accusation of discrimination or stereotyping. It is comfortable to know that language, literature, and composition are for everyone. It would be more comfortable to know how to say he/she, himself or herself, men and women—"ladies and gentlemen" when the occasion is more formal and primary attention is on beauty—boys and girls, God the Father, hero-worship, "set out to seek his fortune," and "got married and lived happily ever after" easily and inconspicuously without placing one before the other, hinting

superiority, or suggesting accepted sex roles. It would be even more comfortable to have sexless generic third-person singular pronouns in the English language.

In literature, for example, Cinderella's life is fulfilled when her prince finds her; Queen Guinevere and Elaine have no life but the love of Sir Launcelot; Shylock would rather have his ducats than his daughter; Tom Sawyer's old-maid Aunt Polly is an of-course crab. It is interesting to note, however, that many women of the Bible and of Shakespeare's plays, even though they are in traditional social roles, either demonstrate strong and unconventional qualities or break out of the role entirely for a time, perhaps by donning a disguise.

Composing is a process in which students can be encouraged to examine their own thinking and attitudes and to qualify their own statements.

Students tend to be strongly influenced by the literature they hear or read during school years in a way that affects their thinking and emotional set throughout their lives. It becomes an obligation of the language arts teacher, therefore, not only to choose for close study those selections of many different types that have literary merit but also to expand student thinking beyond unquestioning acceptance of an author's assumptions. This is in no way to suggest that a teacher try to limit selections to those that seem not to stereotype. Rather, a teacher should help the students revel in the tremendous range of author assumptions and presentations and assist them in analyzing some of the value judgments. The task requires sensitivity and thoughtfulness on the part of the teacher. It may prove difficult.

Without disturbing the reading and discussion of a selection, at or near the completion of the study the teacher might ask students such questions as these for each character that might be stereotyped:

1. What was the most important thing, within the scope of the story, for the character? What was he/she trying to do?
2. Did he/she succeed?
3. Was he/she glad or sad about the outcome?
4. Did the author seem to expect you, the reader, to share the character's purpose and feeling, or did the author write an explanation to justify what the character did and felt?
5. Did the character have other possible alternatives for the way he/she lived life in his/her world and time?
6. Would there be alternatives in our way of life now?
7. If the character did not seem to have an acceptable alternative role in life, why do you suppose the writer limited the character so?
8. What social conventions of the time and place might have limited even the author's thinking and language?

In human beings individually and collectively there is often a strong urge to standardize in order to manage. In opposition there is an equally strong urge in Americans to defend the existence of individual differences in persons and situations and to manage each individually. Equally strong? Perhaps simply strong in constant opposition. It is more comfortable to believe that all men prefer the career and protector/boss role and that all women prefer the wife/mother role, with the teacher, secretary, or nurse role filling the time between school and marriage. If society and school can accept these concepts, they are relieved of the obligation to seek out and

encourage the development of individual talents and interests. The opposition remains, however, because people are different, even though they, sometimes grudgingly, play culturally accepted roles.

Another ideal that Americans would like to believe is that cultural and social changes come about by painless growth as people feel the need for and the logic of them. Perhaps more accurately, many such changes come through behavior modification, as law makers pass laws with apparently little notion of their far-reaching ramifications.

Also involved in whatever change will come about in accordance with Title IX regulations is the propensity of American educators—and sometimes commentators—to misread, misquote, misinterpret, and misapply the actual statement of a law. When controversial issues are more threatening and all-inclusive—standardization again—they may consistently omit rather important words. That was true for a decade or more regarding Federal law which relates to Bible-reading and prayer in public schools. Recently there is a developing interest in what that law really says.

Now schools are on the verge of panic over another misquote of a Federal law. The law mandates equality in "any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." To date, there is no statement of application to those educational institutions which do not receive Federal funds. In fact, the law states that compliance can be achieved by ending Federal financial assistance. Those who comment, however, usually omit this reference to Federal assistance and apply it as a law for all rather than as a condition for receiving Federal funding.

Although the proposed guidelines make specific reference to home economics, physical education, and athletics, no mention of the language arts has yet been made. Teachers, however, can be sensitive to possible application to their discipline. Federal law or none, they are aware that freeing students from the influence of discrimination and stereotyping in the presentation of any group is a very important part of education in the language arts. Many thoughtful teachers have been working at it individually all along. Once again, one wonders why the profession as a whole did not think of it before.

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